



January 25, 2005

Honorable Ron Gonzales &
Members of the City Council
San Jose City Hall
801 North 1st Street
San Jose, CA 95110

RE: Coyote Valley Specific Plan

Dear Mayor Gonzales and Members of the City Council:

Greenbelt Alliance, the Bay Area's leading land conservation and urban planning advocacy organization, would like to take this opportunity to express our concerns about the Coyote Valley Specific Plan. It is our opinion that the Specific Plan, as currently proposed, is fundamentally flawed. Largely due to these flaws, the current price tag for the Specific Plan is \$1.5 billion, and this cost is almost certain to go up. Because of this price tag, it is highly likely that features called for in the City's "Vision and Expected Outcomes for Coyote Valley" will be shortchanged and/or the City will be asked to heavily subsidize development in Coyote Valley.

Greenbelt Alliance is convinced that the leadership of the City of San Jose, the consulting team led by the Dahlin Group, and the City's planning staff all aspire to craft a plan for Coyote Valley that is a model for greenfield development based on smart growth principles. However, the plan, as it stands to date, cannot meet these aspirations. Instead of rushing to conclude a flawed planning process in Coyote Valley, the City should focus on redevelopment opportunities such as North First Street.

The three major flaws in the plan include an entire redesign of the street system, a costly artificial lake, and an untested transit system. The proposed plan calls for demolishing Coyote Valley's simple and efficient existing grid of streets and roads and replacing it with a disjointed, suburban-style road network. The proposal calls for an artificial lake to be the centerpiece of both the flood management system and the valley's urban design. The lake will be a major mobility barrier, impeding traffic flow and transit, and discouraging bicycling and walking. The proposed plan also relies on an unproven transit system instead of technologies that have been demonstrated effective. Each of these

MAIN OFFICE • 631 Howard Street, Suite 510, San Francisco, CA 94105 • (415) 543-6771 • Fax (415) 543-6781
SOLANO/NAPA OFFICE • 725 Texas Street, Fairfield, CA 94533 • (707) 427-2308 • Fax (707) 427-2315
SOUTH BAY OFFICE • 1922 The Alameda, Suite 213, San Jose, CA 95126 • (408) 983-0856 • Fax (408) 983-1001
EAST BAY OFFICE • 1601 North Main Street, Suite 105, Walnut Creek, CA 94596 • (925) 932-7776 • Fax (925) 932-1970
SONOMA/MARIN OFFICE • 50 Santa Rosa Avenue, Suite 307, Santa Rosa, CA 95404 • (707) 575-3661 • Fax (707) 575-4275

info@greenbeltalliance.org • www.greenbeltalliance.org

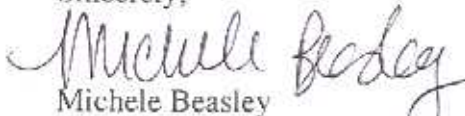
building blocks of the Specific Plan is extremely expensive, driving up the cost of the plan. Greenbelt Alliance strongly believes that there are alternatives to these building blocks that will be less expensive and more effective at meeting the valley's needs.

If the plan is not altered, several features called for in the City's "Vision and Expected Outcomes for Coyote Valley" will be shortchanged. Currently, the plan allocates \$15 million to conserve 1,500 acres in the South Coyote Valley Greenbelt, or \$10,000 per acre. However, the cost of conserving this land is estimated at \$30,000 to \$40,000 per acre. As such, \$45 million to \$60 million will be necessary to just meet the land acquisition goals laid out in the current plan. Even more money will be necessary to establish the innovative "Food Belt" concept for maintaining the greenbelt as viable agricultural land, as has been discussed at Coyote Valley Task Force meetings. The "Vision and Expected Outcomes" also calls for 20 percent of Coyote Valley's housing to be affordable housing. However, in the proposed plan less than 9 percent of the housing is designated as affordable and no money is set aside to meet the 20 percent affordable goal. Additionally, other community facilities, such as health clinics serving low-income residents, are missing from the plan and likely will not be included given the plan's current cost.

Unfortunately, for projects on the scale of Coyote Valley, the costs typically go up, not down, as they near completion. With the current price tag associated with the Specific Plan, the City of San Jose may well be asked to take responsibility for a larger share of the cost of developing Coyote Valley than originally envisioned. This may jeopardize other projects prioritized by the City.

Greenbelt Alliance does not believe there is a single right way to plan for smart growth in Coyote Valley. However, we are convinced that the proposed Specific Plan is the wrong way. The City should be committed to getting it right in Coyote Valley. Therefore, we urge the City Council to direct the planning staff and the consulting team to take the time, and expend the effort, to explore alternatives to the proposed plan. By doing this, the City Council can ensure that development in Coyote Valley meets the City's smart growth goals – and meets the needs of the Valley's future residents.

Sincerely,


Michele Beasley
South Bay Field Representative